

Executive Director Message to All Staff

June 29, 2012

Dear TJJD Employees and Chief Juvenile Probation Officers,

Whether we have worked together for only a few months or for many years, it has been my honor and privilege to work with you to create positive youth outcomes and safer communities. Over the last few weeks, I have had the opportunity to reflect on your many accomplishments over the years, the friendships that were made and that sustained us during challenging times and the youth who have benefited from the educational and treatment programs, the work and care of both professionals and volunteers and the business services that supported agency-operated programs and services as well as community-based programs, services and collaborative efforts.

I considered that this last message would be an opportunity to highlight the successful transition and creation of a new agency, the accelerated rollout of JCMS, the implementation of prevention and early intervention pilot programs in twenty-four counties, the many positive changes within the Texas Youth Commission over the last three years (ACA accreditation, compliance with Special Education requirements, implementation of PBIS, reduced medical costs and improved services as well as a positive relationship with UTMB, college credit opportunities for youth and staff at Navarro College, increased specialized treatment and vocational training opportunities for the many youth who need them, the remarkable 50% reduction in re-arrest rate for gang-involved youth participating in the GitRedy re-entry program and the new programs and services available in halfway houses to re-connect youth to their communities—just to name a few) and all the people who have made these things happen. I considered telling the stories of Jeremy, Pearl, Jose and Zac, who benefited from all the efforts of so many probation officers, TJJD employees and volunteers. I considered acknowledging the challenges we have faced together to reduce youth aggression and staff injuries, to complete six facility closures, and to realign and reform the juvenile justice system in Texas. And, I considered pointing out the obvious, that all of our work requires partnerships and collaboration which require time and commitment internally and externally, including families.

In the end, I decided to simply say “thank you”. There is a quote from a Dr. Seuss book that seems appropriate at this time, “Don’t cry because it’s over. Smile because it happened.” I leave you with a smile, because I had the chance to work with all of you, to learn from you and, together we made a positive difference in the lives of youth. I am able to move on to the next chapter in my life with confidence that you will continue to serve youth, families, and communities throughout Texas in ways that reflect best practices and that achieve the best possible outcomes.

Best regards,
Cherie